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Editorial: Putting state to the test

When Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz spoke at Indiana University Kokomo on Sept. 5, she addressed several important topics facing students, parents, teachers and administrators in the state. One of these was the way in which the state measures student progress.

"As part of the move to the new college- and career-ready Indiana Academic Standards, the [Indiana Department of Education] also is accepting bids to create new assessments," wrote Lauren Slagter, Tribune education reporter, in her story which we published Monday. "Ritz ultimately would like to see a formative assessment system in place with data that follows the students, whatever schools they attend. Corporations could decide whether they wanted to utilize the formative assessment system."

This is a point which should not be overlooked. As a part of this change, ISTEP and End of Course Assessments will be overhauled, with new vendors being investigated. This is a change which is long overdue.

Students need to be tracked on an individual basis. As it stands now, entire classrooms are under the state's microscope. This shift will allow students to be compared to their own previous scores, allowing progress to be measured much more appropriately and discerningly.

"I'm so excited for the new college- and career-ready assessment because it's going to get us away from teaching to the itty-bitty standards," Ritz said in the story.

Ritz said she expects the assessment vendors to be selected by mid-March 2015, with the new assessments available for the 2015-16 school year. For Indiana's students, it can't come soon enough.